(c) to what extent this technique is likely to be useful in solving the problem of water crisis in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAY PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (c) Rain water harvesting is a traditional technique for water conservation and has been adopted at different places with necessary variations to suit the requirement since very long time. However, innovative ideas have been suggested from time to time by many organizations including IITs to make it more effective with due consideration to local factors.

Depletion of ground water

439. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the ground water table is depleting in all geographical regions in the country;

(b) if so, whether it poses serious water crisis; and

(c) if so, what steps have been taken/propose to take for the preservation of water bodies and to prevent ground water depletion and also to replenish the water table?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAY PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A long-term analysis of ground water level by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), under the Ministry of Water Resources, during the years 1995-2004, indicates decline in ground water levels in some parts of various States/Union Territories in the country. Depletion of ground water table leads to drying up of existing wells and hence requires deepening of wells thereby leading to increased energy consumption and pumping costs.

(c) 'Water' being a State subject, it is the responsibility of the concerned State Governments to take suitable action for the preservation of water bodies and arresting the declining ground water level in their respective States. However, the steps taken for the preservation of water bodies and to prevent ground water depletion and to replenish the water table by the Central Government in the country are:-

(i) Constitution of 'Artificial Recharge of Ground Water Advisory Council' with the objective to popularize the concept of artificial recharge among various stakeholders.

(ii) Preparation of 'Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Ground Water' which has identified a total of 4.5 lakh sq.km. area in the country needing artificial recharge of ground water.

(iii) Circulation of Manual/Guide on Artificial Recharge to Ground Water to the States/ Union Territories to enable them to formulate area specific artificial recharge schemes to check the declining trend of ground water levels.

(iv) Implementation of 165 demonstrative recharge projects in various States under the Central Sector scheme on "Study of recharge to ground water" in IX Plan.

(v) Implementation of a demonstrative scheme on "Rain Water Harvesting and Artificial Recharge to Ground Water" by the CGWB in identified areas of the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

(vi) Implementation of 75 artificial recharge and rainwater harvesting studies by CGWB during XI Plan.

(vii) Constitution of the Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) under Section 3(3) of the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986, notification of 43 Over-exploited areas in the country for regulation of ground water development and management and notification of 65 Over-exploited areas in various States for registration of ground water abstraction structures.

(viii) Direction issued by the CGWA to Chief Secretaries of the concerned States to take all measures to adopt artificial recharge to ground water/ promote rain water harvesting in all the Over-Exploited areas falling under their jurisdiction and ensure inclusion of roof top rain water harvesting in the Building Bye-Laws.

(ix) Implementation of pilot scheme on "Repair, Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies" was taken up in the X Five Year Plan at the cost of Rs. 300 crore. Under the scheme, sanctions were issued to concerned 1098 water bodies for 26 districts in 15 States. For the XI Plan, a scheme on renovation of water bodies with external assistance has been announced by the Finance Minister in his Budget Speech for 2007-08.

Digging of wells in Vidarbha region

†440. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) the number of wells proposed to be dug in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra for irrigation under the Prime Minister's special package scheme;

(b) the number of wells dug in the Vidarbha region till now;

(c) the number of wells dug for the purpose of irrigation and for drinking water out of these wells; and

(d) by when this entire project will be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI JAY PRAKASH NARAYAN YADAV) (a) Government of Maharashtra have reported that there is no programme of digging wells under Prime Minister's Special package for Vidarbha. However, under the package provision has been made for 557 minor irrigation schemes.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.